DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 350 581 CS 011 062

AUTHOR Ullery, Laurie V.
TITLE Providing Early Literacy Experiences for Young Children through a Parent Education Program.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 59p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Kindergarten; *Low Income Groups; Parent Attitudes; Parent Education; *Parent Participation; *Parents as Teachers; Parent Student Relationship; Primary Education; Socioeconomic Status; Teacher Developed Materials; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Emergent Literacy; Family Literacy

ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to provide kindergarten students from low socioeconomic families with successful home literacy experiences in preparation for early school success. Parent/child literacy training workshops were designed and conducted to increase the awareness and frequency of home literacy activities. Providing regular reading aloud sessions at home and the modeling of adult literacy behaviors by parents were a major focus of the training provided. Eight solution strategies were developed to train and provide low income parents with the knowledge and materials necessary to increase the home literacy experiences of their children. Analysis of the data revealed that parents increased their frequency of reading aloud to their children during an 8-week period, increased the frequency of adult modeling behaviors, and increased their awareness of the importance of reading aloud to their children. (Two tables of data are included; 31 references and 3 appendixes--containing the family literacy survey, survey evaluation, and kindergarten/parent journal samples--are attached.) (Author/SR)

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Providing Early Literacy Experiences for Young Children Through a Parent Education Program

by

Laurie V. Ullery

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A Practicum I Report presented to the
Ed.D Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Laurie V. Ullery under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Sept. 20, 1992
Date of Final Approval of Report

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer would like to take this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the support and encouragement given to her by Dr. Cheryl H. Wilhoyte, Assistant Superintentent of Instruction and to Mrs. Martha Collison, Area III Director of Elementary Schools. This writer would also like to acknowledge and commend the dedication and commitment of the principal and staff in their unending support for the literacy development of young learners and their families.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT		iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iv
LIST OF TABLES		v
ABSTRACT		vi
Chapter I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Description of Work Setting and Community	1
	Writer's Work Setting and Role	3
II	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	5
	Problem Description	5
	Problem Documentation	6
	Causative Analysis	7
	Relationship of the Problem to the Literature	9
III	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	13
	Goals and Expectations	13
	Expected Outcomes	13
	Measurement of Outcomes	14
IV	SOLUTION STRATEGY	16
	Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	16
	Description and Selected Solutions	18
	Report of Action Taken	20
V	RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	25
	Results	25
	Discussion	30
	Recommendations	34
	Dissemination	35
REFERENCES		37

Appendices

A FAMILY LITERACY PRE-SURVEY 41

B FAMILY LITERACY SURVEY EVALUATION 43

C KINDERGARTEN/PARENT JOURNAL SAMPLES 46

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Frequency of Read Alouds 27

2 Frequency of Adult Modeling Behaviors 28

ABSTRACT

Providing Early Learning Experiences for Young Children Through a Parent Education Program. Ullery, Laurie V., 1992: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Emergent Literacy/Early Childhood Education/Parent Education Programs/Family Literacy/Parent School Relationships.

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The writer developed eight solution strategies to train and provide low income parents with the knowledge and materials necessary to increase the home literacy experiences of their children.

Analysis of the data revealed that parents increased their frequency of reading aloud to their children during an eight week period, increased the frequency of adult modeling behaviors, and increased their awareness of the importance of reading aloud to their child.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The setting for this writer's practicum was a large suburban county located between two large metropolitan cities. The area stretches 418 square miles and boasts a rapidly growing population of 427,238 residents. The average family income of the county is $48,907 and the overall educational level of the residents show that 70% are high school graduates and 20% have completed college (Mitchell, 1987). Disaggregated data for the county reveal that 85% of the population are white, 13% are African-American, and 2% are other minorities.

The county school system serves a population of 66,798 and employs 60.2 instructional staff members per 1,000 students. Professional support staff per 1,000 pupils is 10.3. One hundred-nineteen schools in the system include seventy-six elementary schools. The elementary schools are divided into four geographic regions, with each region having its own school-based support staff of six specialists.

Within the third geographic region lies an elementary school with striking contrasts to the county averages for socioeconomic levels and racial composition. The county average for students

receiving Chapter I services is 3.7%. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch is 9.9% countywide. Demographic breakdown of racial information for the county includes 81.3% Caucasian, 15.6% African-American, 1.0% Hispanic, 1.8% Asian, and 0.1% American Indian students.

At one elementary school in this author's work setting the demographic information presents a completely different picture. From a total enrollment of 583 students, 55.6% qualify for Chapter I services. Of the total number of students at the school, 59% receive free or reduced lunch. Racial statistics show that 17.9% of the students are Caucasian, 74.5% are African-American, 1.1% are Hispanic, 6.2% are Asian, and 0.2% are American Indian.

The community in which these students live is socially isolated from the rest of the county. Residents have difficulty accessing such basic human needs as grocery shopping or health care because of the lack of public transportation. There are no major bus or rail lines available to the community. Few health or human services are currently accessable to this community. Opportunities for organized recreation activities in the community exist only at the elementary school site.

The writer has chosen two kindergarten classes (morning and afternoon sessions) from this low socioeconomic community school as the target population for this practicum. Ninety kindergarten students, 63 of whom are from minority backgrounds, were involved. Fifty-eight of the 90 students were from low socioeconomic families.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

This writer is a certified reading specialist who holds Bachelor of Science and Master of Education degrees in elementary education, a Certificate of Advanced Study in School Management, and certification in early childhood education. In addition, the writer is a certified trainer for Teacher Expectations/Student Achievement (TESA), (Kerman & Martin, 1980), Dimensions of Learning (Marzano, 1991), Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC), and Mastery Learning. The writer is currently employed as an early childhood/reading and language arts specialist. The writer has worked in this school system for twenty-two years as a classroom teacher, gifted/talented/advanced programs specialist, curriculum and program developer, and staff development instructor. The writer has taught staff development workshops in reading/language arts and early childhood education for the state department of education. The writer has delivered staff inservice training on whole language, identifying advanced capabilities in young learners, and thinking skills models.

The writer has had extensive background experience in delivering professional presentations at local, state, regional, and international reading and leadership conferences. Numerous presentations and workshops have been given for parents.

The writer is affiliated with many professional and community organizations and is currently president-elect of a local chapter of an international honorary educational sorority for women educators.

Currently the writer is responsible for the school

identified in this practicum and 22 other elementary schools in the same geographic area. The writer provides service to teachers and children from preschool to third grade. The writer's duties include serving as a mentor to 19 first year teachers and assisting with the implementation of a thinking skills program.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

In working with kindergarten teachers and students from low socioeconomic areas, this writer became aware of a problem which existed among these young students. Kindergarten students from low income families have traditionally not had successful literacy experiences at home in preparation for early school success. These young children come to school without the same preparation in oral language and concept development, listening skills enhancement, and early reading, writing, and print background knowledge that children from other socioeconomic areas routinely receive from their parents.

Kindergarten teachers from the identified school testified that these children lack the same listening comprehension skills, oral language development, concept formation, book handling skills, letter recognition, and print background knowledge that children from middle income families possess as they enter school. The gap widens throughout the year for the low income children, who fall further behind as the kindergarten year progresses. Kindergarten teachers expressed the feeling that these children never fully recover from this disadvantage the

entire school year.

These students, because of their low economic status and low achievement on standardized test scores, tend to qualify in large numbers for Chapter I assistance. The cycle of low achievement is then documented here at the kindergarten level and students from the identified school tend to remain Chapter I students throughout their elementary years.

The early discrepancies in home literacy experiences effect the future success of students from low socioeconomic communities.

The writer believes that kindergarten students from low economic families need more literacy rich experiences at home in preparation for early school success.

Problem Documentation

Evidence for the existence of this problem was supported by interviews with the school principal and staff, questionnaires answered by parents, and data collected from school records.

After twenty-two years of having had the responsibility of providing reading instruction to children at the primary grades, this writer has been keenly aware of the importance of emergent literacy development in the years preceding formal school instruction.

During the fall of the 1991-1992 school year this writer conducted an interview with the school principal at the site of this practicum. He confirmed the writer's premise that parents at this school did not understand the importance of early reading

and writing experiences in the home prior to their child's entry into kindergarten.

Interviews conducted with the school principal, guidance counselor, two school-based reading teachers, and two kindergarten teachers revealed that transportation contributed to the problem. Many parents from the community lack transportation to go tc the public library and many do not have the financial resources to purchase literacy materials for home use.

A family literacy survey was given by school-based reading teachers during the 1990-1991 school year and 66 out of 90 parents responded. The survey evidenced that 22 of 66 parents did not read to their child at all, 20 out of the 66 read only two or three times a month to their child, and 24 of 66 said they read stories to their child twice or more a week. A check of school records by the writer during the 1991-1992 school year showed that 58 out of 90 parents read to their child at least once a week.

Fifty-four of 66 parents who responded to the written survey given during the 1990-1991 school year said that they did not regularly read magazines, books, or newspapers in front of their child.

Fifty three of 66 parents who completed the survey conducted by school-based reading teachers replied that they did not own a public library card.

Causative Analysis

The lack of early literacy experiences in the homes of pre-kindergarten children impacted their future potential for school success. As it existed in this writer's work setting, the problem of providing kindergarten students from low income families with more literacy rich experiences had six major causes.

A primary cause contributing to the problem was the fact that parents were not aware of the importance of developing early literacy experiences at home. Parents did not have the background information about emergent literacy that would help them understand their role as their child's first teacher. Parents did not understand the importance of storybook reading nor did they realize that a relationship exists between the modeling of adult literacy behaviors and the development of emergent literacy skills in young children.

The writer believed that the second cause of the problem dealt with the financial contraints under which low income families exist. These families did not have the financial resources to buy abundant books, writing materials, magazines, and other literacy related materials for use in the home.

A third cause of the problem dealt with the low literacy level of some of the parents of this community. Many, according to the principal and classroom teachers, were unable to read to their children and did not themselves like to read. They did not model the reading of books, magazines, or newspapers at home.

The fourth cause of the problem was the lack of transportation available to this low income community. Parents

did not have public or personal transportation to be able to utilize the public library. Some of the parents were intimidated or indifferent toward utilizing these free services.

A fifth cause was created by the school library itself. Students were permitted to visit the school library only once a week to check out a book. If a student failed to remember to bring back the book on his/her assigned media day, then two weeks passed before the student could bring a book home.

The final cause of the problem related to the school's traditional approach in reaching out to parents. PTA meetings and Back to School Nights had failed to attract the very parents who most needed information to help their children.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A review of the literature indicated the importance of early literacy experiences for children before they enter a formal educational setting. In the last twenty years, a growing body of research on emergent literacy has brought new perspectives about how and when young children learn to read and write.

Teale and Sulzby (1989), Goodman (1990), and Strickland's (1990) findings on emergent literacy support the concept that the process of becoming literate begins at home long before children enter school. Children acquire knowledge about literacy development from their culture (Sticht & McDonald, 1990), and Goodman (1990), including the knowledge about who can and cannot read (Goodman, 1990). Goodman contends that "children come to know language within the context of their culture, society,

family, and socioeconomic group which strongly influences their views and beliefs about who is literate and who many become literate" (p. 116). Wells (1990) summarizes literacy acquisition as an apprenticeship model, similar to Vygotsky's theory of the relationship between learning and teaching. F. Smith (1989) states that children need to see other people reading stories for their own pleasure before they understand what stories are all about.

Teale and Sulzby's (1989) work summarizes four important characteristics of literacy learning in young children.

1. Learning to read and write begins very early.
2. The functions of literacy are an integral part of the learning process that is taking place.
3. Reading and writing develop concurrently and interrelatedly in young children.
4. Children learn through active engagement, constructing their understanding of how written language works (pp. 3-5).

Strickland (1990), Clay (1985), Holdaway (1979), Mason (1990), Doake (1986), Wells (1986), and Greer and Mason (1988), agree that storybook reading at home significantly impacts the literacy development of young children.

Strickland (1990) and Doake (1986) emphasize the importance of a print-rich environment and early storybook reading. "Young children who live in a print-rich environment are constantly observing and learning about language" (Strickland, 1990, p.19). Learning occurs as a natural part of the child's daily life.

Repeated storybook reading helps children acquire the conventions of print like directionality and punctuation markers (Clay, 1985) and helps to simplify the process of learning to decode the written word (Mason, 1990). Holdaway (1979) believes that children learn book handling skills very early, sometimes before they learn to speak, by repeated exposure to bedtime stories.

Wells (1986) discovered in a longitudinal study that early reading aloud experiences were significantly related to the acquisition of literacy and to later reading comprehension at age seven.

Greer and Mason (1988) found, while studying story recall, that the "potential success of all children, regardless of ability, can be increased by exposure to an increased number of books via the library and the home literacy environment" (p.8).

Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) feel that children who do not have home experiences with books and written materials before coming to school are at the very beginning of becoming literate when they reach school.

Children construct their knowledge about print from their independent explorations with print and writing, from their interactions with parents and other literate people, and from their observations of others engaged in literacy activities.

The literature revealed several causes for the problem. Teale (1978) discusses differences in socioeconomic status, in oral language background, and in home environment as common factors for differences in literacy development.

Nickse (1989) points to the realities of life for the economically poor or homeless families whose status make "reading to children neither a habit nor a priority" (p.14).

C. Smith (1990) and Darling (1988) contend that parents of educationally disadvantaged children don't automatically know how to help their child with early literacy experiences and often feel that they are not wanted in the school by educators. They feel powerless to get involved in their child's education (Darling, 1988).

Holland (1987) suggests that boundary setting and territoriality are responsible for negative feelings and unfounded stereotypical criticisms of each other by the school and the parents. Mavrogenes (1990) notes that because most teachers and principals are from middle class backgrounds, they do not understand the culture or values of their low income clients.

Sticht and McDonald's (1990) findings conclude that "the more highly educated the parents, the greater will be the success in providing primary education to the child" (p. 2,3). Van Fossen and Sticht (1991) further cite the large body of research in developed and developing countries that indicates a cause and effect relationship between the mother's educational level and the preschool literacy experiences and eventual school achievement of the child.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this writer was to increase the home literacy experiences of kindergarten students from low income families. This goal includes empowering parents with the knowledge and resources to provide literacy experiences for their children. It is the belief of this writer that all parents, including those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, want to help their children succeed and are willing to do so if they are given the tools and information necessary.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum. The writer had five specific objectives to achieve through the implementation of this practicum. The first objective of this practicum is that 45 of 58 low income parents of kindergarten students will increase their awareness of the importance of reading aloud at home as measured by a survey.

The second objective is that 60 of 90 kindergarten parents will accompany their child on a school sponsored field trip to the public library. An attendance count will verify the completion of this objective.

The third objective is that 65 of 90 kindergarten children will have a story read to them daily for eight weeks by a member of their family. Evidence for completion of this objective will be collected from parent and student surveys. Additional evidence will be recorded by the classroom teachers who will keep a daily log of student book circulation.

The fourth objective addresses the modeling behaviors of the parents. Fifty-five of ninety parents of kindergarten students will model literacy behaviors by reading a book, newspaper, or magazine for pleasure in the presence of their child at least twice a week. A parent questionnaire and school library circulation records will be used to measure this objective. The final objective is designed to assure that students and parents have access to a public library card. Fifty-five of ninety families will complete and receive a membership card to the public library. Measurement of this objective will be monitored by completed applications that are submitted to the classroom teachers via the students.

Measurement of Outcomes

The first outcome of this practicum provided information to the parents about the importance of reading aloud. A pre-survey was given to parents prior to implementation to document parents' awareness of the importance of reading aloud. A post-survey was administered via the classroom teacher following the practicum implementation. Both surveys had open-ended questions and were

written by the author. Parents were given one week to complete each survey. (See Appendix A and Appendix B).

The second outcome was measured by an attendance sheet which parents signed as they entered the classroom in preparation for a school sponsored trip to the public library.

The technique used to measure the effectiveness of outcome three was an open-ended written survey for parents. Parents were asked questions regarding the number of books read in an eight week period. Student effectiveness was measured by a oral interview given by the classroom teachers and instructional assistants. Classroom teachers kept a daily record of the books circulated for each child.

Pre and post surveys were given to assess the effectiveness of outcome four. Parents were asked how frequently they modeled literacy behaviors by reading a magazine, book, or newspaper for pleasure.

A written count by classroom teachers provided quantitative data to measure the completion of outcome five. Families were asked to complete an application for a public library card and submit it for processing to the classroom teacher prior to the trip to the public library.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Kindergarten students from low socioeconomic families need to experience a literacy rich environment at home to help prepare them for early school success.

The literature offered many possible solutions to this problem. The use of parent training workshops pervaded the literature, offering solutions to help parents understand and define their role in the literacy process. Allen and Freitag (1985) offered strategies for using parent and student cooperative workshops. Possible solutions to preventing obstacles to parent involvement were discussed within the reference.

Lujan (1986), who specializes in working with Hispanic parents and children, offered strategies for literacy concept training which focus on the teaching of the reading process, explaining the importance of environmental print, and using literacy games and writing activities within the scope of the workshop sessions.

Mavrogenes (1990) stressed the need for using demonstration, practice, participation, and discussion as necessary ingredients in providing workshops for low income parents.

C. Smith (1990) suggested using non-traditional settings

outside of the school as a practical solution to the problem of attendance at workshops. Churches, community centers, libraries, and project housing meeting rooms can provide a safe, non-threatening, place for families to meet with educators.

Quintero and Huerta-Macias (1990) emphasized the importance of enhancing parent self-concept. Modeling the expected behaviors played a critical role in building self-esteem in low literacy or non-English speaking parents.

Nuckolls (1991) cited the importance of staff understanding, involvement, and ownership of the plan as necessary elements in developing a successful literacy program for families. Bridging the gap between low income parents and the mostly middle class educators can be accomplished through cooperative planning and ownership of the problem by school staff.

Roser (1984), Trelease (1989), and Rasinski and Fredericks (1990) discussed detailed suggestions for enhancing the read aloud experience. Increasing parents' knowledge and skill in delivery of the experience can enrich the process of storybook reading for young children.

Roscow (1991) offered generic materials selection ideas for utilizing sources other than the public library. Teaching parents how to access free or inexpensive literacy materials empowers them to play a critical role in the selection of literacy materials.

There are several other ideas which needed to be explored as well by this writer. The use of appropriate materials needed to be addressed at the identified school. A variety of

multicultural materials should be examined and approved at the school level for use in this practicum project. High quality literature should be considered as well.

The use of alternative resources, both in materials and human resources needed to be considered. Low literacy level parents need to be provided with a means to participate in daily reading aloud experiences for their children.

Non-traditional ways of attracting parent and family participation needed to be explored. Discussing the barriers to participation may enhance and attract more families to become involved in the project.

A lending library of adult and children's materials needed to be facilitated at the school for use by parents and the community. Possible resources of materials to support this venture needed to be explored. Partnerships with other literacy providing agencies needed to be examined. Collaboration of materials and human resources for adults and children needed to be discussed.

Parents and children needed a vehicle to express their questions, reactions to books, and items they wish to share with other participants. Use of a log or journal for this purpose should be considered.

Description of Selected Solutions

There were eight solutions that this writer chose to implement. The writer would serve as resource to teachers who would provide a parent training workshop session emphasizing the

importance of speaking, listening, reading, and writing experiences at home. Specific suggestions for reading aloud at home would be provided to workshop participants. Modeling and and practice would be emphasized at the session.

A daily home read aloud program would be conducted for eight weeks. Materials would be sent home daily to support this effort. A lending library would be circulated from the classroom to provide high quality literature and culturally appropriate materials to parents.

An adult collection of magazines, novels, expository selections, and low readability level materials would be examined and housed in the school media center for circulation among the kindergarten parents. Materials would be made available at convenient hours and over the course of the summer for family use.

Alternative methods would be provided for low literacy level parents. Books with audio cassettes, wordless picture books, volunteer tutors, and the use of other family members as support would be used with identified low literacy level parents. Parents would be encouraged to model the enjoyment of reading by utilizing these suggested alternatives.

The kindergarten children would take a parent/child field trip to the public library. A combined training session on use of the facilities and book selection would be held on site.

Children would be able to check out books on a daily basis from the established family literacy collection housed in the school library after the eight week read aloud program had

concluded. Students would be able to get books during the summer break from the family literacy collection of the school library.

The school would offer workshop sessions by enlisting non-traditional means of delivery. By encouraging joint participation of parents and children, offering incentives, and providing materials, the school would conduct a non-traditional outreach program to attract both parents and children.

There are several reasons why these solutions would be successful. One reason would be that school teams are strategically involved in the planning of the parents training workshops and materials circulation.

A second reason why these solutions would meet with success is that this project's goal philosophically agrees with the National, State. and Local Goals for education.

Another important factor would be this writer's inherent belief that all parents, including those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, want to help their children succeed and are willing to do so if given the tools and information.

The final reason why these solutions would be successful is that the writer has had extensive background experience in presenting reading aloud techniques to parents and professionals and can contribute technical, experiential resource information and support to the teachers.

Report of Action Taken

This practicum project was shared with the county level

administration at central office and with the building principal, reading teachers, classroom teachers, guidance counselor, and media specialist prior to the implementation period. The writer served as a member of the strategic planning team and served as a resource person to that team. A critical step in the implementation process was the involvement of the school strategic planning team in facilitating the planning of the specific dates for training parents and for identifying materials appropriate to the multi-ethnic school community.

A family literacy survey was designed and sent home to assess the home literacy environment, the frequency of reading aloud that was presently occuring at home, and to provide a measure of comparison after the workshops were completed.

At the initial team planning meeting, dates were designated for a parent training session, and ideas were shared to attract and maintain maximum attendance and participation for the duration of the project. It was decided at this session that because of the low socioeconomic make-up of the community, that it would be a good idea to make this training session a social event as well as an informative one and to offer dinner to the families at no cost. A spaghetti dinner was planned to attract more families and the entire faculty and sixth grade students were recruited to cook, serve, and clean-up after the dinner. Local businesses contributed part of the supplies needed for the dinner, and the balance was purchased by a State Department grant. Roles for the parent training portion of the program were discussed and divided among the teachers, media specialist.

reading teacher, and this writer.

The program itself consisted of three parts and parents and children were rotated between twenty minute sessions. Part one informed the parents and children about how books would be circulated from the kindergarten classroom on a daily basis. The second portion of the program rotation consisted of a video which discussed why reading aloud was important. The third segment of the program provided parents with guided practice in reading to their child and gave a demonstration of how to use wordless picture books. At the conclusion of the dinner students and parents selected their first read aloud book to take home and the eight week circulation began.

Modeling of literacy behaviors by adults was discussed by the writer during one of the three sessions. At this time volunteers were recruited by the writer to serve on a committee to preview and select adult reading materials which would subsequently be purchased through donations and would be housed in the school media center to accomodate the literacy needs of the adult community.

The strategic team discussed ideas for managing the task of checking in books daily as part of the normal classroom routine. It was decided that books would be numbered and each child would have a book bag designated specifically for the purpose of keeping his/her read aloud book in school and at home. The kindergarten teachers decided they would teach the children a check-out system by matching numbered cards with the numbered books. The teachers kept a chart of the students names and the

number of the book that they selected, thereby assuring that books were returned to the classroom.

A journal page was given to each child daily in his/her book bag. The purpose of keeping the journal and the parents' role was explained during the parent workshop session. (See samples in Appendix C.)

After the eight week read aloud program was launched, the team met to schedule and plan the trip to the public library. Parents had been informed during the first training session about the purpose for the trip and that they were included as part of this school sponsored trip. During spring conferences the kindergarten teachers gave parents applications for public library cards and requested that they comple.e the forms for themselves and their families prior to the library visit.

The library field trip/training workshop consisted of a story time by the librarian, a tour of the adult section for parents, a tour of the children's section for students, a discussion of suggested books to guide parent selections in choosing interesting and appropriate read alouds, and time for students and parents to browse and check out books from the library using their new cards. Information was shared about the library's summer reading program and special events.

Plans were made by the author in cooperation with the Chapter 1 office to keep the school media center open for six weeks in the summer. A structured story time and opportunities for writing and sharing books was planned with the staff who would be operating the summer program. Students were also

encouraged to bring books home to continue summer reading.

A Celebration of Literacy was held at the conclusion of the program. Families and friends, government and school officials, businesses and neighbors were invited to attend and celebrate the success of the program. Kindergarten students and older siblings participated in the multicultural theme of the program.

An evaluation survey was completed and returned by families participating in the program.

A debriefing session was held by the strategic planning team to evaluate the project, measure the success, and plan for future growth and expansion of the project.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The general setting for this practicum was was a large, suburban school system. One school within that setting was selected based upon a large minority and low socioeconomic population. The problem which was solved through this practicum was that kindergarten students from low income families have traditionally not had successful literacy experiences at home in preparation for early school success. The strategies chosen by this writer to solve the problem focused on empowering parents with the knowledge and materials necessary to conduct literacy experiences in the home. A training program was established to teach parents and children together why it was important to read aloud and to model literacy behaviors. Materials were provided through the school and the public library.

The outcome measures were as follows:

Outcome Measure 1. By the end of the implementation period, 45 of 58 low income parents of kindergarten students will increase their awareness of the importance of reading aloud at home as measured by a survey. Results of the survey showed that 47 of 58 low income parents increased their awareness of

the importance of reading aloud to their child on a regular basis. Four parents stated that they already knew reading aloud was important. Outcome 1 was achieved. Fifty-one of the total 58 low income kindergarten parents completed the final evaluation survey, either independently or with the help of of an older child, another family member, or the school home visitor.

Outcome Measure 2. The second outcome is that 60 of 90 kindergarten parents will accompany their child on a school sponsored field trip to the public library. Permission slips for students were sent home prior to the trip. Parents were asked to indicate whether they intended to accompany their child on the trip. Teachers kept a list of parents who indicated their willingness to participate. On the day of the trip, parents checked off and initialed next to their name to indicate that they were present. Fifty parents indicated that they would be accompanying their child to the library. Only 28 of 90 parents actually attended the trip. Outcome 2 was not achieved.

Outcome Measure 3. Following completion of a parent training session, 65 of 90 kindergarten children will have a story read to them daily for eight weeks by a member of their family. Evidence for the completion of this outcome was monitored in two ways. Parents completed a question on the e aluation survey asking them how often they read to their child in the last eight weeks. Teachers also kept a record of the daily book circulation and recorded which book each child

checked out and on what date they checked it out. The parent survey revealed that all 66 of 90 parents who responded to the survey question read aloud on a daily basis. Teachers' records of book circulation indicated that 45 of 90 kindergarten children took a book home daily. Teachers defined daily to mean that books were check out five days a week for a period of eight weeks. Interviews of the children by the teachers and instructional assistants confirmed the book circulation records. The implications of the discrepancy in these findings will be be discussed in the next section of this report. Table 1 summarizes the pre and post survey of parent responses to the question regarding frequency of reading aloud. Outcome 3 was achieved according to interpretation of parent responses.

Outcome measure 4. The fourth outcome addressed the modeling behaviors of parents. Fifty-five of 90 parents of kindergarten students will model literacy behaviors by reading a book, newspaper, or magazine for pleasure in the presence of their child at least twice a week. Results of a written survey showed that 63 of 90 parents of kindergarten parents modeled literacy behaviors in the presence of their child. Thirty-two of the 63 parents modeled literacy behaviors daily in the presence of their child. Three parents modeled literacy behaviors less than twice a week in front of their child. Table 2 displays the pre and post survey results and shows that a dramatic increase occurred in parental modeling behavior after parent education workshops. Thirty-one parents increased their modeling behavior after parent training occurred. Outcome 4 was

TABLE 1

Frequency of Read Alouds

	Daily	3 times weekly	once a week	none
Pre-Survey	42	20	2	2
Post-Survey	66	0	0	0

N = 66

TABLE 2

Frequency of Adult Modeling Behaviors

	Daily	Twice a Week	Less than twice a Week
Pre-Survey	22	10	34
Post-Survey	32	31	3

N = 66

achieved.

Outcome measure 5. The final outcome was designed to assure that students and parents had access to a public library library card. Fifty-five of ninety families will complete and receive a membership card to the public library. Measurement of this outcome was to be monitored by completed applications that were submitted to the classroom teachers via the students. Teachers decided to distribute applications personally to parents during their spring conferences. After several parents discussed transportation problems in getting to the library, teachers were reluctant to continue to discuss the library application cards. As a result of this initial distribution of applications, 28 children returned the form and received a library card to use on the school sponsored trip. However, during the trip to the library, twenty-five parents completed an application on site at the library and received a card. Six children brought a library card with them that they had previously received through other means. These figures were verified by the public librarian after the school sponsored field trip. A total of 59 of 90 kindergarten students and their their families had access to a public library card. Outcome 5 was achieved.

Discussion

Four of the five specific outcomes which the writer planned to achieve were met through the implementation of this practicum. The goal of this practicum was to increase the home

literacy experiences of kindergarten students by helping parents understand their role and providing them with resources to complete that role. The goal was clearly achieved because students were read to on a regular basis and parents increased their modeling behaviors drastically over past performance.

The fifth outcome, encouraging parents to participate in a school sponsored trip to the library was not met. Only 28 parents attended, not the 55 that the writer had anticipated would attend. In analyzing why this occurred, the writer discussed this outcome with the school strategic planning team during the final debriefing session. The principal and teachers were pleased with the fact that 28 parents, both mothers and fathers attended. They stated that they felt this was a very high number considering the destination of the trip. The team then discussed other alternatives than taking the parents directly to the library. Because a large number of parents did not have transportation to return to the library on their own, ideas were explored to bring the library to the parents. As discussed previously, plans were made to establish an adult collection of books, magazines, and newspapers at the school site. Because of the three month implementation period of this practicum, it was not feasible to complete that task. Progress was made in that direction, and money has been made available to the school through a grant from the state department to purchase the adult materials. A committee consisting of five volunteer parents from the community, the building principal, school media specialist, a representative from the public library, and

the writer will select multicultural adult materials. The public librarian and the school media specialist have also agreed to allow books checked out at the public library to be returned to the school to encourage parents and children who have transportation difficulties to only need a one way ride. Dialogue about the problem of access to the public library is continuing between this writer and the library.

An interesting discrepancy occurred in the measurement of Outcome 3. While all 66 parents said they read daily to their child, book circulation records and teacher interviews did not support this claim. The writer investigated the problem, and realized that some of the children were reading the same book for several successive days because they enjoyed it. Other children who forgot to bring a book back to school and exchange it read some favorite book they already had at home to replace their failure to bring a new book home. The writer and teachers did not perceive this as a problem but as a positive outcome of the reading aloud program. One of the intended objectives was to encouraged the love of literature and this is exactly what happened when students wanted the same book read to them several times.

Other exciting initiatives happened as a direct result of this practicum project. The school media specialist is setting up a drop in story hour for preschool children, ages two to four from the school community once a week. Opportunity will be provided for children to hear stories and for parents to check out adult and children's materials at the same time. The media

specialist volunteered to do this service to the community during her planning time.

The business community became involved in this effort and contributed food and paper supplies for the spaghetti dinner and the literacy celebration at the culmination of the project.

Parents not only participated in daily reading aloud activities with their children, but they also realized how important it is to encouraging writing skills in the development of early literacy. Although this writer did not include completion of a log or journal as an expected outcome, many parents used the log activity to encourage drawing/writing about the books read and used the log as a way to express their satisfaction with the books being read. This journal provided the writer and the teachers a mechanism for evaluating the books selected, as well as assessing student progress in the writing process.

Another unexpected outcome of the project was the cooperation that occurred among the school staff. Teachers at all grade levels volunteered to help with the spaghetti dinner, including shopping for supplies and cleaning up after the event. The school as a whole took ownership of the parent training session. It became a school event, not exclusively a kindergarten program.

Cooperation was experienced not only at the school, the business, and community level, but also from the central office administration. The Chapter 1 office contributed three instructional assistants for a summer reading program, and the

school media center was made available for eight weeks in the summer. A story hour provided children with exposure to a variety of books, and children had the opportunity to take books home with them for their summer reading pleasure.

In summary, children from low income families do need literacy rich experiences at home in preparation for early school success. Parents do want to help their children prepare for school success, but are often ill equipped themselves. By providing parents the training and materials necessary to support literacy development, they will increase the literacy experiences in their home as evidenced by the outcomes of this practicum project.

Recommendations

In making recommendations about implementing a project such as this, it is extremely important to highlight the importance of the strategic planning process which occured prior to and during the implementation process. Nuckolls (1991) discussed the importance of staff understanding, involvement, and ownership of the plan as necessary ingredients for developing a successful literacy program for families. It is by using cooperative planning and ownership of the problem that faculties can begin to bridge the gap between low income parents and themselves.

The use of non-traditional settings outside of the school as suggested by C. Smith (1990) usually provides a safe environment for parents who are uncomfortable about coming to school. In the case of this practicum, the library seemed an appropriate

choice for a workshop setting, but in unreality, it was too far from the community to provide a practical application of literacy materials and training.

Mavrogenes (1990) stressed the need for using demonstration, practice, participation, and discussion as important components in providing workshop training for low income parents. Perhaps the most successful segment of the parent training program was the session in which the media specialist modeled a wordless picture book and then provided books for parents to practice reading a book to their child giving guidance where appropriate. Comments from the observers and participants present hailed the success of that procedure.

Finally, empowering parents to fulfill their role as their child's first teacher cannot be emphasized enough. The self-concept of low income parents is fragile and needs to be fostered in a non-threatening and supportive environment. It is extremely critical to remove barriers to participation and to be open to and aware of cultural differences. The school must accept the responsibility for reaching out to parents in new and unfamiliar ways, for it is only then that low income parents can become empowered and comfortable enough to encourage literacy experiences at home.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum report have been distributed to all of the twenty-three elementary schools in the writer's area via a presentation to the principals. The writer has

shared this practicum with a parent advisory group representing the ten public preschool programs in the writer's county at the request of the Coordinator of Equity and Early Childhood Programs.

This author plans to further disseminate the results of this practicum by submitting proposals to state, regional, and national conferences including the International Reading Association and the National Association of Educators of Young Children.

The writer will prepare an article for possible publication in national literacy journals.

The results of this practicum have been shared with the state department of education, adult and community education division.

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APPENDIX A

FAMILY LITERACY PRE-SURVEY

FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

SURVEY

Please complete and return to your child's teacher by (date).

1. How often do you read to your child?

2. List the family members that read to your child.

3. What do you do before or after reading a story?

4. How often does your child see you reading?

5. What kinds of materials do you read at home?

6. Where do you get books to share with your child?

7. List family members who have a public library card.

8. List the ages/grade levels of children in your family.

9. Does your child show an interest in writing at home? If so, what does he/she do?

APPENDIX B

FAMILY LITERACY SURVEY EVALUATION

FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

EVALUATION SURVEY

Please complete and return to your child's teacher by (date).

1. How often did you read to your child in the last eight weeks?

2. List the family members that read to your child.

3. What did you do before or after reading a story?

4. How often did your child see you reading this year?

5. What kinds of materials did you read at home?

6. Where did you obtain the adult materials you read?

7. Since the library field trip, how many members of your family have checked out materials from the library?

8. As a result of attending the Family Literacy workshops, has your child shown an increased interest in writing at home?

9. As a result of attending the Family Literacy workshops, has

your awareness of the importance of reading aloud increased?

Why or why not?

10. Please describe the most valuable thing you learned from the workshop sessions.

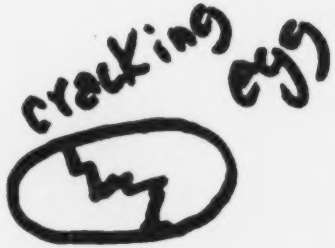
11. Please describe the least valuable aspect of the workshop sessions.

APPENDIX C

KINDERGARTEN/PARENT JOURNAL SAMPLES

Child's Name Tyson

Title Three Little Chicks



Parent Signature RayChelle

Parent Comment I really like the book. It was simple and easy for him to understand

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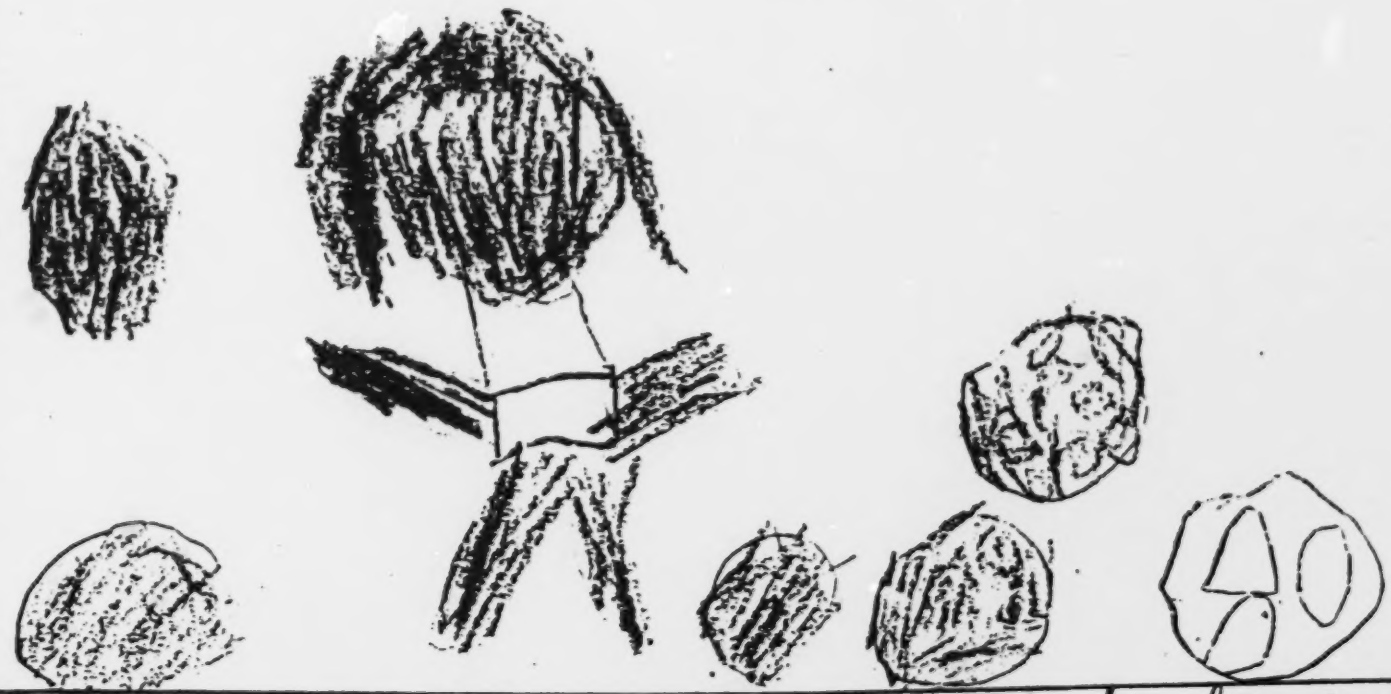
Child's Name Mitzi Gae

Title Mud Pie



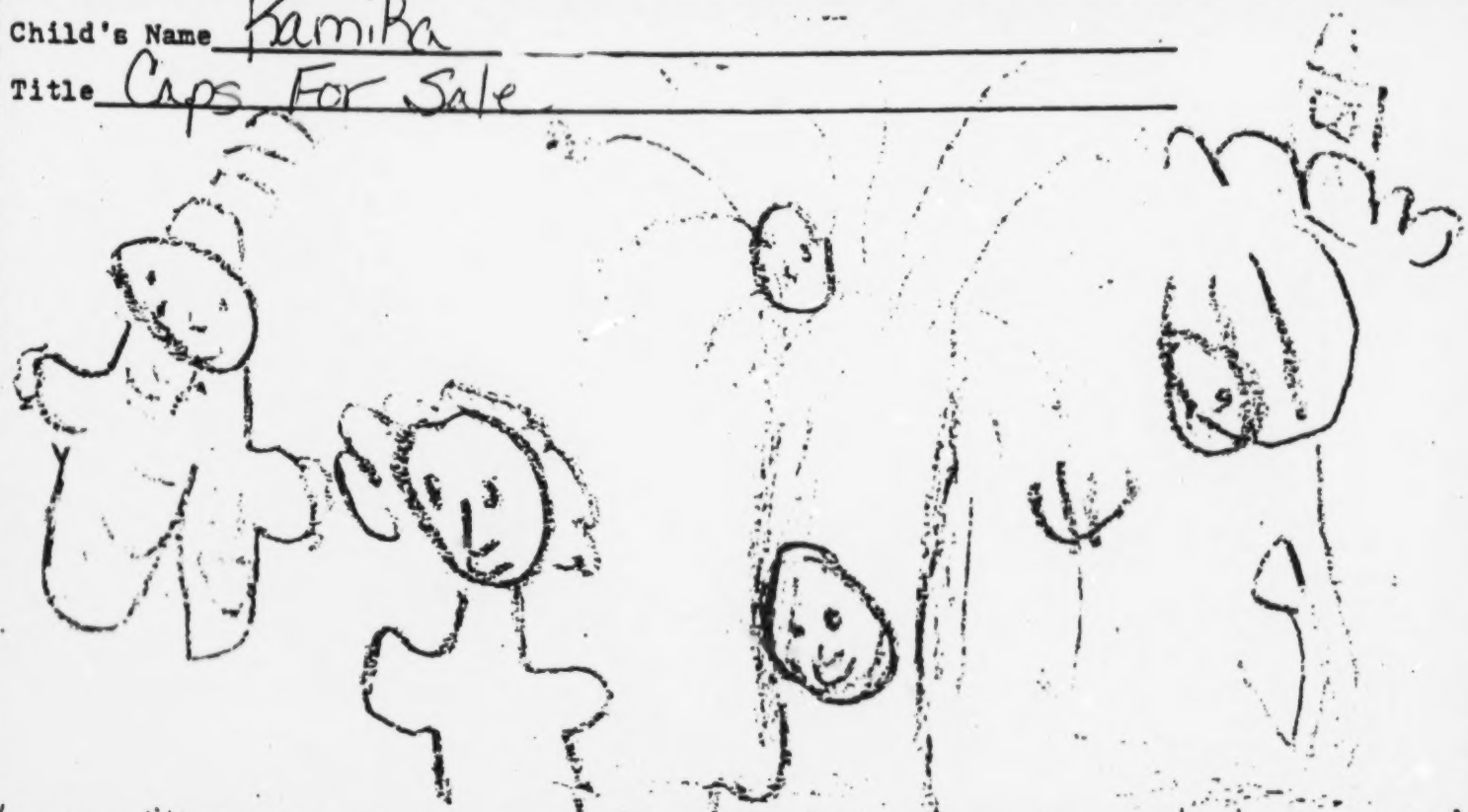
Mitzi's Comment - "It was funny because he had lot of mud in his mouth. He ate mud pie."

Parent Signature Carla M.

Parent Comment Mitzi loved the book and she was so excited I had noticed a very good response from her She looks forward of reading more books.

Child's Name Kamika

Title Caps For Sale



Kamika likes this story. Nobody wanted the blue, red, brown and gray caps. When he took a nap the monkeys had the caps in the tree. He stamped his feet and told the monkeys to give he caps back. The monkeys threw the caps down. The man put all of the caps back and put all red, blue, brown caps together and he walked away. He was the truth.

Parent Signature Donna

Parent Comment I really liked this book and Kamika did to.

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